

PAPER III. The Art of Living in other People's Houses.
Miss Pennethorne.

PAPER IV. Moral Training.—Miss Allen.

WEDNESDAY.

PAPER I. Our Possibilities of Expansion.—Miss Parish.

PAPER II. Nature Study.—Miss Hertz and others.

PAPER III. Discussion on the Governess as the Friend.

CRITICISM LESSON on any point especially desired after the
P.R.S. discussion on Monday.—Miss Pennethorne.

The Committee would be glad to consider any further suggestions as to subjects or speakers.

Students are not expected to deliver formal lectures on these or any kindred subjects, but to be prepared to open discussions, in which it is hoped everyone will join, as the great benefit of such a conference will be in the mutual interchange of experiences.

All questions, other than those of lodgings, should be referred to one or other of the committee:—

Miss Pennethorne, Mayfield, Maidstone.

Miss Allen, XXth Century Club, Stanley Gardens, London, W.

Miss Parish, Eastwell Villas, Ashford, Kent.

DEAR EDITOR,

There is one point about the Conference which does not seem quite clear. Already there has been more than one request from friends of students to be present at our Students' Conference, and much as we would wish to welcome all who are interested in our work, I am afraid that the presence of *anyone* except students would make the Conference an altogether different matter, so I think we must take it as an understood thing that it will be carried on entirely among ourselves.

Sincerely yours,

E. A. PARISH.

RESIDENT GOVERNESSES.

BY MRS. R. L. DEVONSHIRE.

[Reprinted from the "PARENTS' REVIEW."]

Though resident governesses are perhaps not so numerous now as they were fifty years ago, their social status has greatly changed. Feminine labour has become such a frequent necessity amongst the well-educated that it is now no longer considered as a stigma, and there are many professions which a woman can adopt in order to earn her living without losing caste, whereas that of governess was at one time the only career open to a girl of good family and reduced circumstances. The result was in every way regrettable; posts were procured, through the intermediary of friends, for girls who did not care about children, took no interest in education, and worst of all, often started with romantic hopes of bettering their lot by some brilliant marriage, like the heroines of the sentimental novels with which their frivolous minds had been fed. It is only fair to add that there were some exceptional cases—after the pattern of Miss Edgeworth's "Good French Governess"—a few who took their noble task seriously, and who, like Madame de Genlis, studied the theories of writers of their time on Education, and put some of them into practice. But those brilliant exceptions were few and far between; such an attitude of mind was more frequently met with amongst men, tutors of boys, who had other professions open to them, and who had presumably adopted teaching from choice. The fact that it now is a question of choice for women also has had the double advantage of reducing the number of unfit governesses and of causing the whole profession to be more favourably looked upon by the public in general: a governess is now no longer necessarily a poor person incapable of earning her living in any other way. Parents—partly, we will hope, owing to the efforts of the P.N.E.U.—are more awake to a sense of their duties, to the greatness of their task; they are more earnestly desirous of finding a fit associate, a true and loyal partner, and they are proportionately more grateful to those who prove themselves worthy of the trust.

In some cases, a governess is still treated by her employers as if she belonged to an inferior class. This is usually due, on the one side or the other, to lack of refinement. If this is wanting on the part of the employers, the governess should leave them or decide to put up with it, accepting what is bad for the sake of what is good—a very great deal of tact on her part, and some patience, may work an improvement. It often is the case, too, that the governess is morbidly sensitive and inclined to see an affront where none is intended, but only ignorance and carelessness evidenced. A sensible girl will not consider it degrading to sit at tea with the nurses of the little friends of her charges; neither will she expect to take part in any pleasure party or outing where the children are not included. A governess who “knows her place” is not one who considers herself a social inferior, a sort of humble menial, but one who understands that she has entered upon a contract to give her time in exchange for a reasonable salary, and, in fact, that a mother does not pay her for the privilege of enjoying her society, but in order to relieve herself of the necessity of being constantly with the children. Indeed, many a girl who complains that she is “relegated to the schoolroom” whilst the mother of her charges takes one of the children out with her, should realise that the fact that she is trusted with the others is the greatest honour that can be paid to her, and that the parents are confiding their most precious treasure to her care.

A lack of refinement on the part of the governess herself is a much more serious drawback; in no position in life are good manners more absolutely essential. The manners of the governess should be a model for those of the children; if they fail her for a moment, she becomes an object for the criticisms of the whole family. They should be more finished than those of girls of the present day in general, and at the same time offer that unconscious grace and ease which is only to be found in those who have been born and bred in a refined atmosphere; nothing short of that unaffected ease will inspire any respect in the servants—it is the most convincing proof of the social status of the governess. A common error among second-rate people, and one which is an infallible sign of bad breeding, is to attempt to replace that graceful naturalness by a self-assertion, a *sans-gêne*, a

want of deference, which is much too frequent amongst girls; it is astonishing to see how many young governesses seem unaware that they ought not to remain seated before the mistress of the house—a lady older than themselves—to pass in front of her, to open their letters at breakfast without being invited to do so, &c., &c.

The little frictions of daily life count for much in the horror that so many parents have of a resident governess. And yet it is an arrangement which offers many advantages. There are many mothers who are anxious to educate their children well, in the true sense of the word, to superintend their meals, give a right direction to their games and daily interests, &c., and who are themselves too busy to undertake to give to this work all the time it requires. A really good mother is probably also a good housekeeper, a good mistress to her servants, a good wife to her husband; if he is a professional man, she, no doubt, has many social duties. If she is clever, intellectual, interested in philanthropic work, it would be a pity to restrict her sphere of action or thought within the bounds of her own home; besides, her children will grow, and the time will come when her interests cannot be too wide, her intellectual development too far-reaching, if she is to preserve her influence over her sons and daughters.

A daily governess, who comes to give lessons to children for certain given hours of every day, is but a limited factor in their general education, their instruction is her only object. A daily governess who spends the whole day with the children, and goes away to sleep in lodgings or in her own home, presents almost the same advantages as a resident governess, but, with her, the inconvenience to the parents of having a stranger in the house is still greater, as she has no bedroom to which she can retire when not wanted. In large towns it is generally possible to send the children to good Day Schools or High Schools, where they spend the greater part of the day. In the country, away from such facilities, an *ideal* resident governess is invaluable to parents who prefer to keep their children at home instead of sending them to a boarding school.

Formerly, the idea of a coming governess was held up to children as a terror, a sort of judgment about to fall upon them; she was expected to be thin, middle-aged, and

spectacled, fearfully strict, and wielding a sharp-edged ruler with which cold, stiff fingers were soon to become acquainted whilst trying to play scales on wintry mornings. These fears were, and are still, carefully cultivated by the head nurse hitherto reigning in the nursery and now about to be dethroned, usually a worthy but narrow-minded woman, extremely competent to deal with a baby's bodily requirements, but herself mentally undeveloped and childishly jealous and ignorant. The conciliation of this deposed autocrat should be one of the first cares of the new comer; it can generally be effected by great courtesy—people of this class are very sensitive to good manners—and the nurse's superior age entitles her to be treated with respect. The governess will do well to consult her a little, and to follow her advice whenever it coincides with her own opinion of what is right, or when the result is of no importance; it is also wise to avoid any sort of conflict between the two authorities, and, above all, never to allow the children to criticise or disparage the nurse in any way.

Any previous fears the children may have felt are soon dispersed by affection; children easily perceive the love which they inspire, and, if true love of children has originated the choice of their new governess's profession, they will at once recognise its presence and yield to its influence. Her inevitable faults—for even an *ideal* resident governess cannot be perfect—they will also notice immediately, but immediately forgive. Children are wonderfully loyal to those who have won their love, and easily accept the authority of one whom they do not consider altogether perfect. Indeed, it is a great mistake to try to assume the prestige of infallibility. The fact that the governess is continually endeavouring to cure her own faults and to increase her own knowledge constitutes the most inspiring example she can give to her pupils. A girl of 20 or 25, just beginning her career, has obviously still a great deal to learn, and children will work more willingly if they see their governess making use of her time and opportunities. A striking instance of this was seen in a very clever pianoforte player, who never had any good lessons until the age of seventeen; before that she had only been taught by an absolutely unmusical but very persevering governess, who, herself strumming away daily at her exercises, inspired her pupil with enough patience

to acquire an uninteresting mechanical technique; when, some years later, the really good teacher appeared on the scene, it took him very few weeks to turn this ignorant, though gifted machine, into a really fine player, unhampered by any mechanical difficulties. A desire and taste for knowledge on the part of the governess gives her the best attitude for influencing her pupils, whom it helps to appreciate their privileges, the facilities within their reach and their teacher herself. This paper is not intended to include a treatise on the art of teaching; there is one point, however, which deserves special mention. However ideal the intercourse may be between teacher and pupils, passing storms will occur over certain lessons; every child has a strong preference and aptitude for certain subjects, every teacher likewise, and to a delightful, easy lesson, another will succeed which may be the source of tears. It is of the greatest importance that the teacher's discouragement and ill-humour should have disappeared completely before the next subject is settled, or that lesson in its turn will be spoilt. This is so frequently a cause of failures that it is an excellent thing that one or two subjects should be confided to another teacher, if available. It is indeed asking a great deal to expect that a young girl, in whom the sense of responsibility is but newly awakened, should be capable of teaching perfectly every one of the subjects which children are taught now-a-days; and it would be well to obtain the services of some one from outside to teach either music, drawing, mathematics, or a foreign language. Religious instruction should in *every* case be given by one of the parents, preferably the mother.

Direct influence over the children will shew itself in many ways which it would take too long to enumerate here, and which, moreover, can be summed up in two sentences:—
1. The *ideal* resident governess should have every virtue; she is not to be found. 2. The nearest approach to this ideal—and she is to be found—though far from having all the virtues, is convinced that she requires them; her example will shew the children how to strive to attain them, and her love for them and for her work will obtain forgiveness for her short-comings. If a would-be governess lacks enthusiasm and complete unselfishness, she will do wisely to choose another walk in life. It is well to add that some

previous experience is necessary; two or three years' training are by no means sufficient to one who has not had family intercourse with children, either as an elder sister or as an aunt. Without such experience, it is advisable to seek, for a first situation, a family where there is only one child, in order not to be confronted at once with the unexpected difficulties to be met with when watching children's intercourse with each other, and also with the strain on the nerves which results from the constant society of several children healthily noisy, a strain so great that only a girl with good health can safely decide to face it. From every point of view a girl with delicate health should renounce the profession of governess; if she be at all neurotic or hysterical, the care of her own health will preoccupy her, to the detriment of her work, and her influence on the children will be at the same time weakened and deleterious. If she be brave and enthusiastic, forgetful of herself, she will be inclined to tire herself too much, and to injure her later life by present neglect of her health; this danger may be warded off by the motherly care of her employer, but it is not fair that the latter should have the trouble of an extra child on her hands.

But whether the governess be slightly delicate or very strong, some degree of nervous fatigue is inevitable, and necessitates rest and frequent outings which it is well to arrange—as also the holidays—at the time of entering upon an engagement. Every little detail should be settled at that time, leaving nothing to chance, as is often the case, owing to inexperience on either side. The question of holidays is a difficult one, and many a mother hesitates to engage a “right hand” who will fail her at the very moment when she herself will be in need of rest—a moment usually determined by the husband's occupations—and when this rest will be impossible to her if she cannot rely on the only substitute in whom she has any confidence. If the children are young, the responsibility is often very great, and the entire value of the governess consists in her being able to share it. One who proves herself ready and competent to do so is indeed a treasure, and, like other treasures, will not be parted with easily. One whose absence makes no difference will easily obtain holidays and have frequent opportunities of going out, but the value to the mother will

be very small; she must choose between the convenience of going out when she likes and the consciousness that she is sadly missed when away. It must be remembered at the same time that she on her part probably has brothers or other belongings, who are only free at certain times in the year, and whom she will want to see. The whole subject deserves a great deal of consideration and much unselfishness on both sides. Again, it will be necessary for the governess to have frequent times of rest and freedom away from the children, but the latter will be quick to perceive it if she longs for those intervals and yearns to get rid of her pupils; it will decrease their faith in her love, and lower the pedestal erected for her in their hearts.

It ought to be arranged from the very beginning that the governess should take her evening meal and spend her evening alone in the school-room; this arrangement may make her feel lonely at first, but it will later on become exceedingly precious; the need for solitary quiet increases with time, besides which, some leisure is wanted every day in which to write letters, mend clothes, &c. However charming and delightful her employers may find the governess, they will often be glad to be alone, and it is better that they should be sorry not to see more of her than tired of seeing her too often. There will no doubt be many other occasions when she will see the parents of her charges, and it is then that the stranger within the gates, instead of being the daily trial that so many married couples dread, may become not only a pleasure and a comfort to them, but, indirectly, a positive influence for good. Many husbands who have thoughtlessly acquired the detestable habit of discourtesy to their wives, and who give no attention to their language or appearance when alone with their family, will be ashamed to utter “swear-words” before a well-bred young lady, or to come down to breakfast unshaven or in slippers. The mistress of the house, on the other hand, may hesitate to show signs of frivolity and extravagance before a pure girl, full of the charms of youth and of youth's natural yearnings for pleasure, and yet obliged to work for her living, and to dress with the utmost economy. The self-restraint they may both exert to hide such habitual faults will doubtless cause the faults themselves to diminish and to loose their hold upon them.

For both parents, but especially for the mother, the presence of such a girl may become an immense comfort; she will identify herself with all the interests of the family, taking part in their joys, their anxieties, their troubles—pecuniary or otherwise—rendering such small services as might be expected from an eldest daughter, and reaping her reward in the affection given her in return. Her unselfishness will help her to sympathise with the many difficulties of the mistress of the house, whose task is infinitely more complicated than her own. It may happen that if the lady is an attractive, amiable, and kind-hearted woman, this sympathy may become a sort of idolatry on the part of the girl, a sort of sentimental exaggeration to which many girls are subject. It would be very regrettable that this should lead to long conversations, usually introspective, wasteful of the time of both women, and more harmful than useful; a far more valuable form of friendship is that which expresses itself by absolute relying of the one on the other and confidence in the other's love and readiness to help in any trouble or difficulty. Such talks may indeed take place now and then, but only when something important really needs to be discussed, when the one desires to consult the other; there is a great difference between "talking over" some difficulty and "having a talk" for the mere sake of talking. The mother may and should become a valuable confidante to the young governess, but aimless gossip and morbid, sentimental talk should be scrupulously avoided. Sometimes a girlish friendship is formed between a young governess and a daughter of the house, an elder sister of the pupils, or a great intimacy develops with an elder pupil; this again is natural and beneficial so long as it keeps within healthy bounds, and so long as every sort of jealousy is avoided between the friend and her brothers and sisters, or between the governess and the mother. All her pupils should look upon their governess as their friend, the companion of their pleasures, as well as the director of their studies; pleasures and occupations will vary, of course, according to the ages and tastes of the children, but an ideal governess will be equally ready to make sand-pies or doll's clothes, to play cricket or to read music, to go out bicycling or to suggest the working of pretty fret-worked or embroidered Christmas presents for the apparently unconscious parents. There will be no reason

why the mother should be jealous of her, for she will encourage the children to go to their mother with every little secret and to consider her before every one else in the world; and she on her side will have too much trust in both mother and children, and too much unselfish common sense to suppose whenever they are talking together that she herself is the subject of their conversation.

It sometimes happens that a resident governess is thrown a good deal into contact with visitors, and this is looked upon as a source of difficulties; there is no reason why it should be so, and the governess is sure to do right if she conforms to the rules of good breeding. It would be equally bad taste on the part of any young girl, staying in a house as a guest, as on the part of the governess, to thrust herself forward and to try and attract notice; and pretty, girlish modesty enhances the beauty and charm of the daughter of a millionaire as well as of the poorest curate's child. If the governess has reached middle-age, she may allow herself more freedom and even more display of her intellectual culture, her age will shelter her from criticism, and her kindness of heart and sympathy for young people will make her companionship attractive and welcome.

Some young and pretty governesses are made a great deal of by employers much older than themselves, and assume towards friends of the family a spoilt-child attitude which is usually highly resented. Another serious error frequently committed by certain governesses, too much self-absorbed to be tactful, consists in making constant allusions to their position, draping themselves in their poverty and its hardships, as if they considered it a becoming garment; such egregious want of taste is the result of a most objectionable self-consciousness.

A great many details vary absolutely according to the pecuniary and social position of the family in which a governess finds herself; even her attitude towards the servants is considerably influenced by it. This question is such a difficult one that it has become a custom amongst ladies, when making enquiries previous to the engagement of a governess, to ask, "How does she get on with servants?" It is obvious that, in a small household, where a few servants have much work to do, a tactful girl will take care to give them as little trouble as possible; she

will keep her bedroom in perfect order (indeed, tidiness and punctuality are two qualities which *must* be acquired if absent—they are essential), she will brush her own skirts, clean those shoes which do not require blacking, and above all, she will forbear from constantly ringing the bell. In a very rich household, on the contrary, the servants, numerous and leisured, will probably conceive a more favourable opinion of a lady who lets them wait upon her as if she had always been used to it. In every case, she should treat them with absolute politeness, while scrupulously avoiding any familiarity and discouraging any attempt at gossip. Servants in a small household often try to induce the governess to join them in silly chatter; this is extremely dangerous. She may, however, listen to confidences about their own private affairs and often give them advice and sympathy. Sometimes the school-room party, *i.e.*, the governess and the elder children, gather round the nursery tea table with the nurse and the younger children under her sole charge; the governess will do well to let the nurse preside, and especially, not to behave as if she thought it somewhat beneath her dignity to sit at a meal with a servant. Surely, if the parents of her pupils consider this servant good enough company for them, why not for her as well? It is far better to assume the position of an eldest daughter of the family, or else to request at the time of her engagement that such an arrangement should not be made.

All the preceding remarks apply solely to a middle-class governess, living in a middle-class family, under ordinary circumstances; exceptional cases naturally demand exceptional capabilities. For instance, it often happens that a governess is required to take a mother's place with some motherless children; she must bring a motherly heart to her task, and accept all a mother's difficulties and responsibilities with only a few of a mother's joys. Enough of these will remain to amply recompense the devoted woman who gives herself up lovingly and earnestly to her mission.

Some ladies find situations in very great, almost princely houses; their task will be made easier, instead of more complicated, by a rigid etiquette, which will greatly diminish their share of responsibility.

A few words may be said concerning the duties of the parents towards the governess, of the employers towards

the employed. Their duties are simpler than hers in this sense, that they represent a smaller segment of the circle of their daily life; she is less important to them than they are to her; she represents for them their duty towards their children rather than their duty towards a stranger of yesterday. Nevertheless, parents who are capable of conceiving an adequate idea of their duties towards their children, will seriously and reverentially accept a certain responsibility towards the lonely being thus suddenly made an inmate of their house, besides being ready to offer true esteem and affection to her whom they will have chosen to assist them in their noble task. They enjoy that immense advantage that they can *choose* their assistant, and this advantage, like every other, implies an accompanying responsibility; between three or four girls, equally unselfish, earnest, and intelligent, parents may make a very happy or a very unhappy choice. It is of great importance that there should be a harmony of opinions between them, first of all, on the religious question. Unless there is total indifference on the part of the parents, the governess should belong to the same religion, to the same demonination, and have the same degree of fervour. Certain wise parents reserve the question of religious teaching for themselves absolutely, exacting from the governess a complete non-interference; this system is not a bad one, and comes next to the first which is often impossible to realise. A similar harmony should reign as to social surroundings, education in general, family intercourse, &c. The governess will be more at home, freer to put her heart into her work, if she does not feel herself quite transplanted. Parents who engage a girl socially above or beneath their own rank, have no right to blame her later on for alleged haughtiness or want of breeding.

If a foreigner is engaged in order that she may teach her language, very great differences must be expected in education, manners, and even religion; even then, it will be wise to seek for one in whom those differences may be as slight as possible. Parents who have engaged a foreign governess will do well to take advantage of the fact to make of her an object lesson for their children, shewing them with what kindly consideration we ought to treat foreigners, whose qualities are entirely different from our own. Such

enlightened courtesy is unfortunately too rare in this country, perhaps especially amongst schoolboys, in whom an insufferable "insularity" takes the place of patriotism.

But, whether English or foreign, nearly perfect or sadly deficient, the governess has a right to expect that the employers will uphold her prestige and authority over her pupils; if her peculiarities make this impossible, they will do better to give her place to another, for children cannot submit to a divided authority. If she should commit pardonable errors, they should be pointed out to her in private, never before the children. Parents should never, on any account, allow children to criticise their governess or to laugh at her; the little ones need not be discouraged however from relating small incidents to their mother if they wish it; the mother should appear convinced that the governess herself would not have the slightest objection to this.

The parents and the governess need have no false shame in acknowledging their business relationship before the children, for it is inconceivable that children whose father works to support them should consider it a dishonour for a woman to receive a well-deserved salary for her pains; parents capable of humiliating a gentlewoman on that score wish for no advice and would follow none. As it has already been said, parents so completely devoid of manners must be let alone or taken as they are, and it would be a mistake on the part of the governess to allow every little pin-prick to hurt her. If good reasons induce her to remain with them, she should meet them with an indifference made of some contempt, perhaps, and a great deal of pity—they know not what they do.

A well-bred mother who is desirous of bringing her children up to become refined men and women, will choose a well-bred girl for their governess, and will treat her as such, with as much consideration as they would show to a guest; the governess' comfort will be attended to, she will be given a pretty, bright, bed-room which she can look upon as her own, and fill with her own belongings; in the country she may keep pets of her own or have a little garden to cultivate. Her health will be cared for, books will be lent to her, in short, every attempt will be made to make her happy. Such thoughtfulness will be attended with unfailing success in a household where peace and love already reign; all the theories in the world cannot take their place.

LETTER FROM MRS. FRANKLIN.

DEAR STUDENTS,

One welcomes the suggestion in your last number that members of your Association who cannot afford to subscribe to the "Parents' Review" should avail themselves of the offer made by one or two members to pass the Review on to them.

Anything which will encourage ex-students of the House of Education to *read* the Review must commend itself to all who have their welfare at heart. One cannot help bemoaning how many old students lose not only their enthusiasm but even their efficiency when they are working in distant country posts and with people who are not able to give them much help and support. In wanderings up and down the country lecturing at various branches, when I of course speak of the House of Education as well as of the other organizations in connection with our work, I hear reports of many students. Naturally, one is often cheered by people who speak gratefully of their governesses' work; but I am sorry to say one also too often hears of ex-students who fall very short of the best standard. Every student should realize the responsibility towards the College and towards Miss Mason's teaching and training which rests upon her shoulders, and how such facts as these I am about to mention cast discredit on the work which we all so much value:—

A. tells me of a student who refused to be in the school-room out of actual lesson hours, and who generally thought only of pleasure-seeking and self.

B. (not a P.N.E.U. member, and knowing nothing of our work), mentions that her governess, one who had done well at College and was highly recommended, continually failed to manage or interest her pupils. The lady, most anxious to help her, suggested, as one little aid to schoolroom management, that the children should sit opposite to and not by the side of the teacher. Think, dear students, that any of your number should need to have so elementary a factor in "The